

A Critique of Capitalism Written by a Former Republican

by
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An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Thesis Advisor

Jason Powell

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jason Powell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'J'.

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Abstract

The majority, if not all, of the world's problems exist because of capitalism. I did not used to believe that. I was a Republican who strongly believed in government, capitalism, and business. After an internship at the Republican National Committee, I was fearful of being close-minded for the rest of my life. I decided to explore the truth of capitalism and its global effects. This thesis is a collection of responses to anti-capitalist literature, and an opportunity for me to express why I believe capitalism is no longer the solution, but the problem.

Acknowledgements

It is imperative for me to thank Jason Powell, Ph.D., assistant professor of history and Honors College professor extraordinaire. His support and knowledge of anti-capitalist literature has paved the way for my imminent success. Unfortunately, he did not help me with my paralyzing fear of demons, since he also shares that fear. He actually made my fear a little worse. But I really recognize the faults of capitalism now. I can talk to the demons about it when they possess me.

I would also like to thank Benjamin Louis Purcell, who loved me, at first, unwittingly, and then knowingly, through my various political stages.

Author's Statement

I completed this creative project in order to better understand something political that was foreign to me. Originally, my thesis centered on my journey learning about socialism, a philosophy I had feared because of my strong conservative roots. After reading a few pieces of literature and talking with my thesis adviser, I realized I wanted to focus on the one key aspect of ending my closed-minded conservative ways: the detrimental nature of capitalism.

The literature and film I reviewed were chosen based on use of statistics, personal histories, and explanations of capitalism. I wrote a total of 10 journals, six commenting on discoveries from personal research into monopolies, government documents, etc., and four on pieces of literature and film. This included *Angela Davis: An Autobiography*, *Food, Inc.*, *The True Cost of Low Prices*, and *Anarchism and Other Essays*.

Each piece of literature and research did not necessarily comment on capitalism directly, but more so illustrated something negative that occurred because of capitalism. For Instance, *Food, Inc.* looked at how capitalism is affecting our health, Angela Davis captured capitalism's effect on race, and *The True Cost of Low Prices* did a spectacular job of showing Third World country injustice because of those who participate in capitalism.

The other six journals gave me an opportunity to showcase personal reactions, like when I discovered something I never knew about our government, or when I heard a philosophy that completely changed my opinion on charity through big business. These journals looked at some of the easily accessible and shocking information that was never taught in public school history class but every U.S. citizen should know.

This thesis was about expanding myself politically and academically through research and creative thought, and I would consider it a success.

"...And you might feel that there was more to you than that, you might feel that you had understood the meaning of the Age of Enlightenment (though, as far as I can see, it had done you very little good); you loved knowledge, and wherever you went you made sure to build a school, a library (yes, and in both of those places you distorted or erased my history and glorified your own). But then again, perhaps as you observe the debacle in which I now exist, the utter ruin that I say is my life, perhaps you are remembering that you had always felt that people like me cannot run things, people like me will never grasp the idea of Gross National Product, people like me will never be able to take command of the thing the most simpleminded among you can master, people like me will never understand the notion of rule by law, people like me cannot really think in abstractions, people like me cannot be objective, we make everything so personal. You will forget your part in the whole setup, that bureaucracy is one of your inventions, that Gross National Product is one of your inventions, and all the laws that you know mysteriously favor you. Do you know why people like me are shy about being capitalists? Well, it's because we, for as long as we have known you, were capital, like bales of cotton and sacks of sugar, and you were the commanding, cruel capitalists, and the memory of this is so strong, the experience so recent, that we can't quite bring ourselves to embrace this idea that you think so much of. As for what we were like before we met you, I no longer care. No periods of time over which my ancestors held sway, no documentation of complex civilisations, is any comfort to me. Even if I really came from people who were living like monkeys in trees, it was better to be that than what happened to me, what I became after I met you."

-Jamaica Kincaid
A Small Place

Journal One: Reasons

It's difficult to figure out who's right and who's wrong.

Well, when you are firmly on one side of the political spectrum, it's not.

Liberals are always right, and conservatives are always right. Each side has all the answers and will not listen or collaborate with the other. Universal health care will drive out doctors. Universal health care will insure millions. Increased taxes will support the economy. Corporations support the economy. Small businesses support the economy. It's a woman's right to chose. Abortion is murder.

I've been a Republican since I wore my first self-chosen American flag t-shirt to the Frisco, Colorado 1997 4th of July Parade. At first, it was parental influence, but it eventually became me matching my values to a particular party. As it turns out, it seemed Republicans liked money and individual freedom more than democrats. And I look great in red. Plus, I have a natural inclination to argue with people, and everyone in high school always wanted to talk about how much they hated Bush and how Iraq was the worst thing to ever happen in the history of the universe. (I personally think the worst thing to ever happen in the history of the universe is vegetarianism because hoagies are delicious.)

On my very first day in college, someone asked me why I was Republican. I responded, "Because I love America." Not the best answer; it was probably the worst answer, I agree, but the feedback I received didn't exactly encourage me to hop on the donkey anytime soon. The two gentlemen I was talking with were condescending enough to give me another reason to hate liberals and solidify my conservative beliefs. (There's psychology in there somewhere.) I became even

more closed-minded because, from that point on, it seemed that no one wanted to have a discussion with me. The minute I said I was conservative, people would scoff in my face, laugh quietly to themselves about my apparent idiocy and walk away to go do something liberal like support higher taxes and gun control.

I now understand that liberalism and socialism are two completely different political philosophies, but they were the same in my mind until last year. To me, liberalism was socialism and communism and Rastafarianism and they were all the complete opposite of conservatism, and I hated everything they believed in.

The spring semester of my sophomore year, I did a non-political internship in Washington, DC. It didn't have to be non-political for people to still discuss politics, and those condescending tones just kept surfacing. Even the fact that I was socially liberal (meaning I supported LGBT rights, I was pro-choice—a very narrow version of what it means to be socially liberal) couldn't keep away the scoffs when I identified myself as a Republican. After a semester of tolerating the judgment, I just had to be with my people. That summer, I worked at the Republican National Committee (RNC). Long story short, I found out that everyone at the RNC is fucking crazy. I didn't like their closed-mindedness and I realized that's how I must seem to other people.

I'm doing my best to forget the propaganda that has been thrown at me for the past 21 years and open myself up to critiques of capitalism. I am studying my initial reaction when I read anti-capitalist literature and then analyzing the origins of that reaction in order to determine its credibility. For example, I recently read a book that blamed the government for the low socioeconomic status of

impoverished people in the United States. My initial reaction was disbelief and contradiction. I was taught that poor people were poor because they didn't work hard enough. We are in the land of opportunity. How can someone be poor if they did everything they could? Instead of feeding that negative reaction, I opened my mind to the book's explanation and considered what it was saying.

It's important to point out that my beliefs have changed drastically since I first thought of this project one year ago. I started this project as a hardcore conservative, wanting to understand the "opposition" and see if the "lies" they were feeding me (like global warming) were actually true. Right now, I am in no-man's land, playing poker and drinking whiskey with both sides to figure out what I actually think.

Journal Two: *Angela Davis: An Autobiography*

"The children fought over nothing—over being bumped, over having toes stepped on, over being called a name, over being the target of real or imagined gossip. They fought over everything—split shoes, and cement yards, thin coats and mealless days. They fought the meanness of Birmingham while they sliced the air with knives and punched Black faces because they could not reach white ones."

In order to start gaining sympathy for socialism, not necessarily believing in socialism but understanding its appeal, one must start despising capitalism. From my perspective, capitalism is the opposite of socialism because of capitalism's heavy dependence on private ownership; the private ownership of markets, capital, labor, and production that benefits the few and eventually murders the many (see journal about the documentary *Food, Inc.*).

It's easiest to develop a hatred for capitalism when you can see how it personally affects another human being or, as Angela Davis' autobiography pointed out to me, an entire group of people.

The detrimental effects of capitalism are so widespread that I even found fodder for my socialism project while doing some recreational reading during Christmas break. A long lost love of mine directed me to a civil rights leader who explained the awful effects of capitalism through her personal experiences.

This long lost love turned out to be feminism. Feminism had always been dormant in me, just waiting for me to find it in the depths of my uterus. I was a Republican, so thinking women were equal to men was naughty, but I was too

strong-willed to suppress the urge to be strong-willed. I read three books in two weeks by a young feminist named Jessica Valenti. Jessica Valenti loved Angela Davis. I bought Angela Davis' autobiography. And you know what I discovered? Angela Davis REALLY hates capitalism. And you know why Angela Davis hates capitalism? Because it's RACIST.

Angela Davis is an African American political activist who began fighting for the rights of blacks in the mid-1960s. Before Davis became a member of the Black Panther Party, the Communist Party USA, and a prominent figure in the Civil Rights Movement, she was lucky enough to be well educated. After spending two years at a segregated school in Birmingham, Davis traveled to New York City to attend Elisabeth Irwin High School, where she learned about socialism in her history classes. "For the first time, [Davis] became acquainted with the notion that there could be an ideal socioeconomic arrangement, that every person could give to the society according to his ability and his talents, and that in turn he could receive material and spiritual aid in accordance with his needs" (Davis). From her education at Elisabeth Irwin, Davis became an advocate for socialism, a political state that she believed would release her African American peers from capitalist enslavement.

Reading Angela Davis' autobiography allowed me to appreciate what it meant it to be black before and during the Civil Rights Movement. It taught me that "racism...is a weapon used by the wealthy to increase profits they bring in" (Davis). Capitalists make money through oppression, whether it is the oppression of governments, countries, or people. The United States government

discriminated against blacks; I'm sorry, *still* discriminates against blacks because they provide a scapegoat for the flaws of capitalism.

Our government tricks us into thinking that capitalism benefits those who help themselves. It says that capitalism will benefit you if you deserve it; as long as you work, you shall reap the benefits. If you are impoverished, it's your own damn fault. I used to eat this bullshit for breakfast and then eat it for lunch and dinner and sometimes for a midnight snack because I really like to eat. While I was eating, it never occurred to me that the problem was the system, not the people living in it. I'm an upper middle class, white, Christian from Colorado whose parents work for the military. The system wants to have lots and lots of sex with me so it lures me into bed by keeping me feed, warm, and employed. While it's keeping me feed, warm, and employed, capitalism likes to whisper in my ear about the inherent laziness of blacks and the poor. Its whispers about gangs and violence and welfare but falls asleep before it can admit that it caused the gangs and the violence and the welfare.

"It didn't make sense to [Angela Davis] that all those who had not 'made it' were suffering for their lack of desire and the defectiveness of their will to achieve a better life for themselves. If this were true, then, great numbers of our people—perhaps the majority—had really been lazy and shiftless, as white people were always saying" (Davis). It doesn't make sense to me either.

Journal Three: Trust and The Government



Patriotism is a funny thing. As a Republican, I felt obligated to love the government because patriotism was a large part of my identity. Simultaneously, I strongly believed in small government, particularly state government, because I thought the federal government was inept. It's too hard to take care of more than 300 million people at once. Regardless of this belief, I still loved and trusted the government. (Oxymorons are not my friend.)

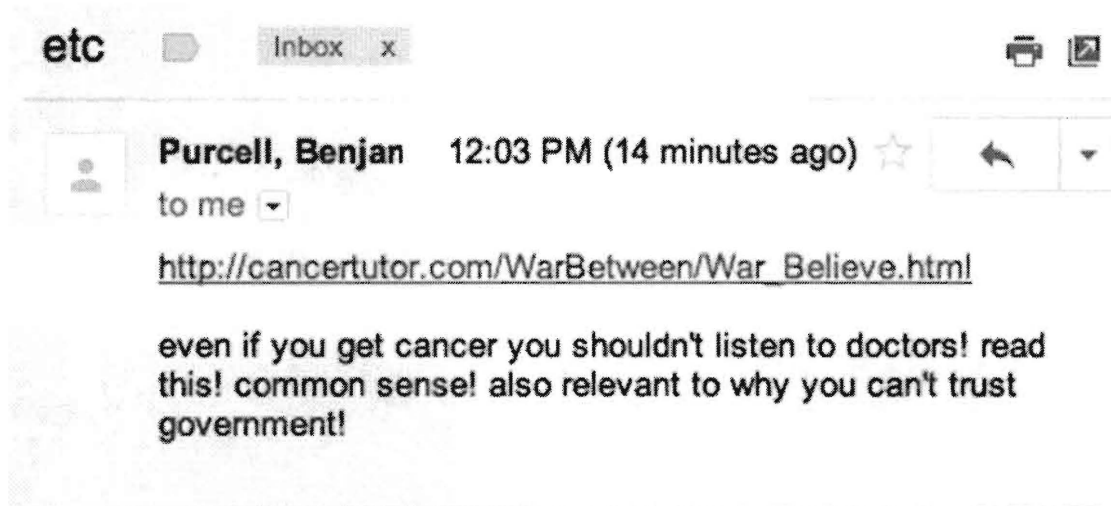
I no longer love and trust the government because of things I have learned in the past few months. That absence of love for the government has pushed me to be less patriotic and, in turn, has pushed me to be more accepting of socialism (which, in my mind, has always been anti-patriotism).

There are plenty of conspiracy theories floating around about 9/11, aliens, and the Denver International Airport (supposedly the headquarters for the New World Order—I've seen some murals in the airport and they are creepy, so it just might be true!), and I began to think that all negative thoughts about the United States and its wonderful, wonderful government should just be lumped in with those theories. As it turns out, there is a lot you can learn about the government that is 100 percent true and 100 percent shocking. There are things that should be well known, taught to us in elementary school, so we can learn to question things we hear in the media (owned by about three people who frequently

engage with the government) and not run around like a bunch of idiots with idiotic opinions.

For example, I learned about Operation Northwoods, a covert operation suggested to the Kennedy administration by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1962 so the U.S. could declare war against Cuba. After the Bay of Pigs, which was a huge fucking disaster, the Joint Chiefs of Staff wanted the CIA and other organizations to commit acts of terrorism in U.S. cities in order to drum up support from Congress and the public. They would blame these bombings, zombie attacks, or whatever acts of terror they decided to use, on Cuba, so that our government could declare war, oust Fidel Castro, and eliminate the spread of communism. (Also, the U.S. and its corporations made a lot of money off of Cuba.) THANKFULLY, Kennedy was like, "HEY, YOU GUYS, THIS WILL KILL AMERICAN CITIZENS AND I REMEMBER READING MY JOB DESCRIPTION AND IT MAYBE SAID SOMETHING ABOUT KEEPING PEOPLE SAFE OR HELPING THEM LIVE AND EVEN IF IT DIDN'T THIS IS FUCKING RETARDED." I wasn't there, but I think this is almost verbatim.

Along with this legitimate evidence of evil and untrustworthiness, I have my boyfriend yammering in my ear every month about something else the government has done to trick and control U.S. citizens. Last month it was fluoride in the water, this month it's how the government perpetuates cancer because it is such a profitable medical issue.



For our government to work, its citizens' need to be informed. If we actually want a true, functional democracy, our citizens need to be knowledgeable and care about what the government is doing. Unfortunately, I am still skeptical, because if we are the most informed, intelligent human beings, our government can still keep things from us—mostly because that's how it makes money. I believe that a socialist government might have less to hide than a capitalist, or seemingly capitalist, government, or it would at least be more willing to discuss its faults. It seems to me that a socialist government wouldn't attack its citizens because a socialist government does not function on illegal profits.

Journal Four: *Food, Inc.*

"We want to pay the cheapest price for our food and we don't understand that comes at a price." –Eduardo Pena

The food we eat is bleached in chlorine, genetically mutated, covered in pesticide, and more because the government rewards huge, multinational corporations and disregards our safety. We could produce healthy food for little money, but the five companies that own the entire food industry refuse to relinquish their power and billion-dollar profits. The U.S. government could limit the power of those five companies but that would mean individuals in the U.S. government would also relinquish their power and fortunes. The people who are supposed to be protecting us gain too much to actually regulate the companies that are LITERALLY killing us.

"1 in 3 Americans born after 2000 will contract early onset diabetes. Among minorities, the rate will be 1 in 2" (Kenner).

Many people blame obesity and other weight-related diseases on personal decisions and behavior. These same people fail to recognize that the biggest indicator of obesity is actually income level. People of lower socioeconomic status prefer spending \$1 on two double cheeseburgers that fill them up to spending \$1.98/lb of broccoli that does nothing to satiate a hungry stomach. You can't blame someone for wanting to spend less when they are already struggling. Well, we do, and I don't think that's fair. It's not fair because we aren't even giving them the option to be healthy. The government, Congress, and other U.S. institutions favor unhealthy food because it's cheap. Cheap means more profits

for the big corporations and more profits for the big corporations means more money in the government's pockets.

"The last 25 years, our government has been dominated by the industries it was meant to be regulating" (Kenner).

The people who are supposed to be protecting us are the same people who are directly benefiting from capitalism. *Food, Inc.* showed some very interesting career paths of U.S. government officials that basically illustrated corrupt capitalism. It turns out that many U.S. officials, congressmen and the like were once affiliated with Monsanto, possibly the most evil food corporation in the history of the universe. (The Empire doesn't even come close to the evil of Monsanto, which is why those assholes get a journal all to themselves.)

- John Ashcroft (Governor and Senator): Received record donations from Monsanto
- Robert Shapiro (Clinton's Advisory Board): Monsanto CEO
- Margaret Miller (FDA Branch Chief): Chemical Lab Supervisor for Monsanto
- Linda Fisher (EPA Deputy Administrator): Vice President of Government and Public Affairs for Monsanto

And the absolute worst connection between the government and Monsanto that *Food, Inc.* unveiled was through Michael Taylor. During his time at King and Spaulding, Taylor advised Monsanto on genetically modified food labeling. During his time as the deputy commissioner for policy for the FDA,

Taylor oversaw the FDA's decision not to label genetically modified foods. You have got to be fucking kidding me.

The U.S. government is letting us consume E. coli, ammonia, and other dangerous chemicals and bacteria because of its greedy, greedy ways. They are letting these multinational corporations directly exploit human beings for profit. Letting U.S. citizens eat a bunch of nonsense is exploitation. And using human beings for slave labor, then discarding them, is DEFINITELY exploitation.

After Upton Sinclair published *The Jungle* in 1906, the meatpacking industry slowly became one of the best industries in which to work. Because of the Beef Trust and labor unions, meatpacking became one of the best jobs in the United States. In the 1950s, the job provided great benefits, valued safety, and protected its employee's livelihoods. The good times couldn't last long, especially with the increasing demands of the fast food industry, their primary customer.

Cheap corn exported to Mexico from the United States (because of NAFTA) had put more than a million and a half Mexican farmers out of business. Companies like IBP, National Beef, and Monfort started to capitalize on the fact that so many Mexican farmers were unemployed and began to actively recruit illegal immigrants to work, for dirt cheap, at their meatpacking plants. As soon as the non-immigrant movement hit the United States, the government could no longer turn a blind eye to the use of these illegal immigrants in the plants. In the case of Smithfield workers, the immigration authorities arrest 15 workers per day so that the production line remains unaffected. Instead of the government blaming Smithfield, the company who hired these immigrants, the workers

themselves are being punished, like criminals. All they've been doing is giving us bacon to eat with our eggs in the morning. That is a horrible injustice bred by the practices of capitalism.

Journal Five: Crony Capitalism

One of the (many) problems with capitalism is the fact that it is really hard to define. Whenever I think of capitalism, I think of the free market. According to Wikipedia, the free market is when prices are determined by supply and demand. This is a very loose definition, seeing that many different economists disagree on what it means to have a free market. Classical economists believed a free market economy should be free of monopoly rents, while advocates for laissez faire believe that people should be free to form monopolies. If it's this hard to define one (supposed) aspect of capitalism, I cannot imagine how hard it must be to define capitalism itself.

According to the *New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics*, capitalism is "generally considered a philosophy of economic systems that favors private ownership of the means of production, creation of goods or services for profit or income by individuals or corporations, competitive markets, voluntary exchange, wage labor, capital accumulation, and personal finance." Essentially, capitalism depends upon private ownership, and the arguments persist when the government steps into the picture. The more I learn about what capitalism is supposed to look like, the less of it I see in our current economic system.

Earlier this year, I went to the International Students for Liberty Conference (to support a friend), and I saw a bumper sticker emblazoned with the words, "STOP CRONY CAPITALISM." According to Investopedia, crony capitalism is "a description of capitalist society as being based on the close relationships between businessmen and the state. Instead of success being

determined by a free market and the rule of law, the success of a business is dependent on the favoritism that is shown to it by the ruling government in the form of tax breaks, government grants and other incentives." The United States is currently a string of monopolies, and all those in power seem to be avid participants in this crony capitalism. But why wouldn't they be? When you're in power, all you want is more power, wealth, and prestige, and that's easily obtained when you support the economic system that supports you. This crony capitalism rampant in the United States supports companies like Monsanto.

Monsanto is a company...to be honest, I don't know what Monsanto is because this is what's in the "About Monsanto" section of their website:

producing more conserving more improving lives
 THAT'S SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE. AND THAT'S WHAT MONSANTO IS ALL ABOUT.

Monsanto could not exist without farmers.

Billions of people depend upon what farmers do. And so will billions more. In the next few decades, farmers will have to grow as much food as they have in the past 10,000 years - combined.

It is our purpose to work alongside farmers to do exactly that. We do this by selling seeds, traits developed through biotechnology, and crop protection chemicals.

the Challenge:
 MEETING THE NEEDS OF TODAY WHILE PRESERVING THE PLANET FOR TOMORROW

According to Monsanto, Monsanto is a company that really needs farmers and sells seeds to those farmers that they desperately need. According to Natural

Society, Monsanto is the “Worst Company of 2011” for threatening human and environmental health.

By 2008, 90% of soybeans contained a Monsanto patented gene. According to the EPA, soybeans are the second largest crop harvested in the United States, covering more than 72 million acres with profits of more than \$12 million. Because Monsanto owns the intellectual property of this genetically modified gene that now exists in more than 64 million acres of soybeans, there are almost no “public” seeds anymore. This means that Monsanto can sue the farmers who attempt to clean these seeds to replant next year. Monsanto, a private company, has taken over seeds, something you wouldn’t think would happen. *Food, Inc.* interviewed a farmer in the midst of fighting a lawsuit from Monsanto, something most farmers don’t even attempt to fight. The farmer is already facing \$25,000 in legal fees and the rest of his farmer colleagues refuse to speak to him in fear of also being targeted by Monsanto. Because of crony capitalism, Monsanto does not need to live in fear.

If the United States had a pure capitalist system, Monsanto would not be able to OWN ALL THE SEEDS. They would be allowed to genetically modify a seed, but they would not be able to sue farmers for cleaning and reusing a seed simply because the genetically modified seeds blew into that field with the wind. The farmers that are being targeted did not steal the seeds from Monsanto. They did not intentionally

take the genetically modified seeds to replant them. Monsanto's seeds blew over onto other farmers' fields and, from my perspective, ruined the integrity of their seeds. I think farmers should be able to sue Monsanto.

You would think that Monsanto's immoral and unethical behavior would be punished immediately, but our monitoring system, the government, fully supports Monsanto and its evil, evil ways.

Our government supports Monsanto because of the mutually beneficial relationship. Monsanto had close ties to the Clinton and Bush administrations, and Clarence Thomas, an associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, used to be one of the company's attorneys. These types of relationships hinder economic and social progress. This is how the rich get richer, and the poor get poorer.

The crony capitalist system in existence today is quickly destroying our country and the rest of the world. The rich continue to favor themselves and their rich friends, while the poor continue to suffer under the infinite power of the wealthy. The poor have no defense because the wealthy have tricked the masses into thinking that the poor do not deserve any help. According to the wealthy, people of low socioeconomic status are given many an opportunity to rise up, but their inherent laziness prevents them from accepting this charity. That is insulting.

Journal Six: *The True Cost of Low Prices*

“Virtually every ‘hungry’ country produces enough food for all of its people. The essential problem is that food is not distributed fairly.”

The argument against capitalism requires only two things: statistics and stories. Each statistic plays a role in arguing against the destructive forces of capitalism politically and financially, while the stories fight against it socially and morally. *The True Cost of Low Prices*, a book actually written for wealthy Christians to advocate liberation theology, uses both statistics and stories to illustrate the utter violence of globalization and, in turn, capitalism. Vincent A. Gallagher blames capitalism for child trafficking and prostitution:

“Child prostitution and trafficking of children are linked to poverty, economic development, industrialization, increasing materialism, international tourism, and militarization....Forced into desperate poverty or lured by materialism, thousands of Thai villagers, for example, have chosen to sell their land or knowingly even their children to agents for a few hundred dollars. In nine villages in three northern provinces, only five girls between three and sixteen years of age remained in the village. Research indicates that less than 10 percent of Thai adolescents enter prostitution willingly; 90 percent enter because of family poverty.”

Reading all these devastating statistics is demoralizing, but there is nothing more frustrating than realizing that these statistics don't even have to exist. The entire world has enough resources and money to stop starvation and

prevent child prostitution. Unfortunately, capitalism favors those who are already wealthy. All those resources and money that could create the world peace that every pageant contestant dreams about just ends up in the pockets of those who can afford to buy food, water, clothes, and all the Caribbean islands.

Michael Eisner, the CEO of Disney, paid himself \$667 million in five years. The women in Bangladesh sewing Disney shirts slave for fifteen hours a day, seven days a week, while being paid five cents for each \$17.99 shirt they sew. One of these women would have to work for 210 years to earn what Eisner does in one hour (Gallagher).

That's simply disgusting. No one person needs that much money, especially when people are being physically and emotionally abused so he can even make that money. The United Nations Children's Fund reported that an investment of \$80 billion per year is needed for all children to achieve a minimum standard of living, including access to food, safe water, sanitation, primary health care, and basic education (Gallagher). Eighty billion per year is less than one-third of one percent of global income, and, in five years, Eisner made up .83 percent of that \$80 billion. One person, out of seven billion people on Earth, was actually a part of the percentage.

We are tricked into believing that the United States is a generous nation, and that we already spend enough money helping those less fortunate in other countries. According to a poll referenced by *The New York Times*, most Americans believe that the United States spends 24 percent of its budget on foreign aid. In 2004, the United States spent 0.16 percent of its gross national

income on aid to poor countries. "This puts the United States next to last on the list of developed countries and their contributions of humanitarian aid to poor countries" (Gallagher). Why is the wealthiest country in the world contributing the least to the world in which it exists? And why do we think we are doing everyone in the world a big favor? Our celebrities visit these poor countries and donate some of their personal fortunes to make themselves feel better about their unrightfully earned wealth, but that doesn't mean our government can take advantage of their guilty charity. It's simply embarrassing how little we spend to help other human beings. The United States and its most patriotic residents preach about opportunities. Opportunities that we fail to provide to the world and our own citizens. According to capitalists, these people didn't earn the right to food and clean water.

Journal Seven: *Anarchism and Other Essays*

Emma Goldman is nothing short of a badass. Her writings and philosophies helped shape the anarchist political movement in the United States and some parts of Europe, and this was before women had rights. Goldman wrote and lectured about prisons, atheism, freedom of speech, militarism, capitalism, marriage, free love, and homosexuality. Most of all, Goldman wrote and lectured on anarchism, and why it was a solution to America's woes.

According to *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics*, anarchism is "generally defined as the political philosophy which holds the state to be undesirable, unnecessary, and harmful." This is a very broad definition, since some schools of anarchist thought value individualism, while others value collectivism. I used to think anarchism was a nasty idea that didn't make a lot of sense. How can anarchists protest or rally when that goes against anarchism itself? Anarchists don't want any sort of structure! I had never actually looked at a definition of anarchism, which was the main reason for my ignorance. I like *The Concise Oxford Dictionary's* definition because it shows that anarchists are simply against the state because it hurts its citizens. It does not specify the type of government, which I like even more. Not all anarchists are completely against every single type of government, but they are against those that are harmful. I believe that the United State's capitalist government is generally destructive, which is why reading Emma Goldman worked nicely into this thesis.

Goldman's passion for anarchism arose from her recognition of the hopelessness of the impoverished. The hopelessness did not come from the

impoverished and their incompetence, but from an oppressive government. This oppressive government has “imposed one single mode of life upon all, without regard to individual and social variations and needs” (Goldman). Some may argue that the United States is too large for the government to care about the individual. I disagree. We have a mayor, governor, and three congressmen representing the city, state, and district where we live. They are charged with the individual’s needs, but they are too busy putting money in their own pockets to care about their charges. Washington corrupts politicians because the higher-ups in government claim that the economy needs to be supported through big business. I believe that big business, i.e. capitalism, is the “one single mode of life” that has been imposed upon all of us.

The United States supports a “gluttonous appetite for greater wealth, because wealth means power; the power to subdue, to crush, to exploit, the power to enslave, to outrage, to degrade. America is particularly boastful of her great power, her enormous national wealth. Poor America, of what avail is all her wealth, if the individuals comprising the nation are wretchedly poor? If they live in squalor, in filth, in crime, with hope and joy gone, a homeless, soilless army of human prey” (Goldman).

Journal Eight: The Restrictions on Freedom

It's easiest to develop a hatred for capitalism when you look at its effects on people who are not always learned about in history class. People who fought for their freedom. Revolutionaries that resisted governments that strangled their livelihoods and took advantage of their resources, whether those resources be human beings, crops, or labor. During K-12, the only revolutionaries we learned about were those that fought the British for the freedom of the United States of America. (One day I'll write a book about how we have the douchiest country name in the entire world. What if Central America wanted to unify under one government? It's just not fair to claim the entire "America" as ours. It should be the United States of North America. Even that sounds douchey. I propose we choose a new name out of the following three that I provide: McDonald's States, Sleepless in the States, or Texas.) The American Revolution was the good revolution because it helped us and only us. It freed us from an unjust system and then gave us the ability to fuck everybody else over for the next 236 years. We can learn all about our revolution but we can't learn about Cubans fighting for their freedom. Why? Cuba was not supposed to be free. Their freedom cost us a lot of money and if there's anything we hate, it's Latinos and losing money.

Our demand for liberty defines us as a country. As Americans, we take pride in the fact that we fought for our freedom, but we'll be damned if we let someone else do it. Freedom is no longer free in the hands of capitalists. They charge for everything.

Journal Nine: Cultural Capitalism

"It is much more easy to have sympathy with suffering than it is to have sympathy with thought." –Oscar Wilde

Philosopher Slavoj Zizek has spent part of his very eccentric career discussing a phenomenon that erupted just in the 21st century: cultural capitalism. Cultural capitalism is the "amalgamation of philanthropy and corporate capitalism; in this paradigm, corporations and large businesses utilize philanthropic mediums to encourage consumerism." Two examples Zizek mentions in a popular YouTube video are Starbucks Coffee Company and TOMS Shoes.

Both (very large) companies sell products with a promise of charity and an assurance of morality. Starbucks, which operates 19,555 stores in 58 countries, has a "Responsibility" tab on its website denoting volunteerism, ethical sourcing, diversity, etc. A consumer can download the Starbucks Global Responsibility Report and learn about the Starbucks Youth Action Grant. TOMS Shoes' entire business model is based on philanthropy. "With every pair you purchase, TOMS will give a pair of new shoes to a child in need." It is incredibly important to note that *Forbes* ranked Howard Schultz, the CEO of Starbucks, as the 354th richest person in the United States, with a net worth of \$1.1 billion, and Blake Mycoskie, the founder of TOMS, has a net worth of \$5 million.

Cultural capitalism is essentially big business allowing people to ignore that capitalism itself is the problem. It tricks people into thinking that, through their misguided purchases, capitalism is the solution. People get warm feelings in their hearts (about themselves) when they do something good for another

person. Volunteerism, recycling, etc. is appealing because it allows people to believe they are really making a difference. Fortunately, these companies are offering an even faster solution to those people with low self-esteem. They can purchase something for their own selfish reasons, and then do something great for the world! As Zizek puts it, "you buy your redemption from being only a consumerist." Because these large corporations have the ability to use charity as a means to increase profits, people are kept further away from recognizing that there would be no need for charity if these corporations did not exist.

Instead of donating to a charity that helps impoverished people find employment, "the real aim [should be] to try to reconstruct society on such a basis that poverty will be impossible...The altruistic virtues have prevented the carrying out of this aim." These problems exist in the United States because we have no distinct culture on which to cling. Capitalism is our culture. The American Dream is how we are defined and how we define ourselves, and the American Dream is capitalism. Wealth, power, and success is the ultimate goal, and we reward those who reach it by giving them more wealth and power, narrowly defining the meaning of success. We could easily solve all the world's problems by denying capitalism, but we refuse to accept that capitalism is not the answer when it is our culture. It is the ultimate belief! We see suffering, and we feel sad, so we pretend to fix it for our own peace of mind. If we just accepted that the suffering does not have to exist, it could be better. Unfortunately, that system does not make it OK for me to make millions of dollars and then get praised for donating a few bucks to charity and traveling to Africa to hug the little black kids

with my large sunglasses and extravagant diamond earrings. Capitalism is the problem, but the masses passionately defend the problem. I think Emma Goldman says it best: "I insist that not the handful of parasites, but the mass itself is responsible for this horrible state of affairs. It clings to its masters, loves the whip, and is the first to cry Crucify! the moment a protesting voice is raised against the sacredness of capitalistic authority or any other decayed institution."

Journal Ten: The End

One year ago, I was a conservative capitalist, defending the actions of the United States and glorifying its government. I believed that capitalism was just, and those with immense wealth had rightfully earned it. My mind shifted after an internship with the Republican National Committee. I saw the dirty side of politics, and I saw what it meant to be closed-minded and irrational. (I do want to defend my former people for a second by saying that Democrats have become just as closed-minded and irrational as Republicans.) I wanted to become a knowledgeable contributor to society, not just another political minion convinced by red faces and false statistics. This thesis was a way for me to learn the truth about capitalism. I call it the truth because the past nine journals I wrote were written from facts, statistics, and personal histories. I can see why capitalism is a corrupt practice, and I can see why there is so much hardship and unanswered cries for help. With this knowledge, I will be able to wade through all the political bullshit that suffocates the media. I will not dwell on capitalism's inadequacies, but I instead will support the right solutions to corruption, poverty, homelessness, and inequality.

My first wade through the bullshit was at the International Students for Liberty Conference. It was held at the Grand Hyatt in Washington, D.C., and attended by students all across the country. I've never seen so many good-looking suits in my life. I was there in support of a friend who goes to Pepperdine University and lives off of her father, an executive at Shell. One of the free books they gave to all of the attendees was *The Morality of Capitalism*.

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